nature net

The **Nature***Kenya* Newsletter www.naturekenya.org July 2002

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Mid Year Waterbird Counts

Scheduled to take ploce at Lake Nakuru, 27 & 28 July. Register your interest with Alfred Owino, Ornithology Dept, National Museums by calling 3749957 or email kbirds@africaonline.co.ke

WORLD SUMMIT ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The world's nations met at the "Earth Summit" - the United Notions Conference on Environment and Development, UNCED - in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in June 1992. There they recognized the importance of the environment to the world's future, and chorted out a bold new course of action, Agenda 21. Ten years on, nations and non-governmental groups are meeting again in Johannesburg, South Africo, from 26 August to 4 September, 2002, for the World Summit on Sustainable Development - "Rio Plus Ten".

The mood is not upbeat going into Rio Plus Ten. The issues of globalization and terrorism have taken centre stage in the lost few yeors, pushing oside environmental concerns. While the 1992 meeting produced some long-lasting achievements, such as the Convention on Biologicol Diversity, the stote of the environment continues to deteriorate. The World Trade Organisation, with many provisions that discourage sustoinobility, seems to be the winner in current popularity.

Nature Kenya and its Youth Committee will be represented at the World Summit on Sustainable Development. We hope that they ond other committed environmentalists can still steer us towards a sustainable future.

Gambian Fruit Bat photo courtesy of M. D. Tuttle Bat Conservation International

TALKS & VIDEOS

BATS & their ECOLOGICAL ROLE

An Illustrated talk by Paul Webala

Monday 8 July '02,

5:30 p.m. Ford HALL,

National Museums of Kenya, Nairobi,

Refreshments prior & Town drop off

Apart from snakes, probably no other groups of animals seem so shrouded in mystery, mythical folklore and misinformation. Exaggerated fears of disease and dark tales of bloodthirsty vampires have contributed to the vilification of bats. This along with a misunderstanding of their ecological role has led to their widespread eradication. Yet the vast majority of bat species are not only harmless to humons, livestock and crops but have great ecological ond economic importance.

Seed dispersal and pollination of trees and shrubs by bats are crucial for the survival of tropical rainforests. Bats that pollinate such plants as the Baobab (*Adansonia digitata*) can be referred to as 'keystone species'. Were such pollinators eliminated, the loss could trigger o coscode of linked extinctions.

However, the most importont consideration in most cases may not be bat extinction, but the effect of bat numbers becoming inefficient to service rainforest, and associated, ecosystems. This requires large populotions, not mere remnants.

The contribution of bats to a healthy ecology has gone largely unnoticed or misunderstood for far too long, even among biologists and conservation planners. Bats provide indispensoble services of seed dispersal, pollination and natural insect population control.

David Kuria and Peter Mwongi Manji accepted KENVO's award (symbolised by a pair of binoculars), at the annual BP Conservation Awards in London on 19 April 02. From left is the CEO & Director of BirdLife International, Dr. Mike Rands, KENVO Chairman, Mr Peter Manji, Guest of Honour, Baroness Young, Project Leader, Mr. David Kuria, Kenya High Commissioner to Britain, Mrs Ester Kiruî, BP Group Vice President Health, Safety and Environment, Mr John Mogford

Developing Nature Kenya Membership – We need your support!!

The office is in the process of developing a membership strategy, which should assist in building the profile of the organisation, improve on the services rendered, and increase the number of members and the means of income.

A workshop will be held in September, and in preparation for this task groups will have to meet focussing on different areas of membership and come up with recommendations:

- **Appropriate profiling for the organisation**
- **Effective publicity and communication (ie publications)**
- **Value adding benefits**
- **Regional growth**
- **Creating partnerships**
- **Generating sales**
- **Managing the process**

If you have skills or experience in PR, Communication, Organisational Management, Corporate Involvement, Publishing or Editing, (and if you have time to meet in July and August) – WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT!

If you cannot volunteer for this but have views about any aspect of membership, we wont to hear from you. Please send your caments to Catherine Ngarachu by post mail, fax or email, as soon as possible!

GRASSROOTS GOSSIP

BALANCING CONSERVATION WITH COMMUNITY SURVIVAL

by David Kuria

The Kijabe Environment Volunteers (KENVO), the Site Support Group for Kikuyu Escarpment Important Bird Area, have received the prestigious BP Conservation Programme follow-up award.

KENVO through the Kikuyu Escarpment Outreach Project 2002 will follow up on the forest surveys they carried out in 2000 which investigated the causes of the observed forest disturbances, looked into resources uses and tracked community perceptions and attitudes towards forest and birds in the Kereita indigenous forest.

Surveys carried out by the KENVO team in 2000 confirmed the forest as an important biodiversity area that hosts a variety of both fauna and flora of international significance. It has a particularly rich bird life and has been designated as an Important Bird Area and listed by Nature Kenya in the highest priority category —'critical' for conservation action.

The neighbouring communities have traditionally relied upon the forest to supplement their livelihoods, and have uses for over forty species of birds. The uses, or meanings, range from moral, decorative, pest control, telling the time, environmental indicators and traditional beliefs.

However, the forest is heavily degraded and is rapidly losing its important biological and environmental value due to unsustainable human activities. The community depends on the forest for products like fuelwood, posts, grazing and collection of bamboo for fencing. Other uses include charcoal burning, illegal commercial timber harvesting and poorly managed shifting cultivation systems. These are linked to the high level of poverty and low conservation awareness among the local community and the corruption amongst some of those entrusted to manage the forest.

So how do you convince people that the forest is not just important, but is in fact keeping people alive? Most KENVO volunteers are part of this community, who have grown up with the conflicts over resources and understand the value and importance of the forest from both the community and the conservation angles. And it is from within that they have begun changing people's attitudes.

Through the project the KENVO volunteers identified a willingness from community members to become involved in forest conservation initiatives if their livelihoods were to be improved. These include promoting and initiating environmentally friendly income-generating activities like bee-keeping, ecotourism, tree nurseries and forest rehabilitation. Further biodiversity assessment and monitoring, the establishment of a mobile education team, and the recruitment of more volunteers will support these initiatives.

REGULAR ACTIVITIES

BIRD RINGING

Meet at the Museum, Nairobi Botanic Garden, at 7:00 a.m. every Thursday.

SUNDAY BIRDWATCH

Members meet at the National Museum, Nairobi car park at 9:00 a.m. the third Sunday of every month, **i.e. 21 July**. The members decide where to go. Bring lunch

TREE WALK

Guided Tree Walks in the Arboretum on the last Monday, i.e. **29 July from 9:30 a.m.** Meet at the FONA offices beside the Girl Guides HQ. *Those who are not members of FONA or Nature Kenya pay Ksh 100/- fee on arrival at the gate.*

WEDNESDAY MORNING BIRDWALKS

Bird watching walks at sites in and around Nairobi. Meet at the National Museum car park every Wednesday at 8:45 a.m. Return about 12:30 p.m. *Those who are not members can get temporary membership at Ksh 100 per birdwalk, payable on arrival at the car park.*

ARABUKO-SOKOKE (COAST)

The Saturday birdwatch with the Arabuko Sokoke Forest Guides Association is on the first Saturday of each month i.e. **6 July, at 6:30 a.m.** from the Visitor Centre, Gede. Cost 100/- per person.

FFJ Bird Walk (Coast)

Friends of Fort Jesus birdwalks are held the third Saturday of each month i.e. **20 July, at 4:00 p.m.** Please call Marlene Reid on (011) 491 648 to confirm

Ngong Road Forest Walks, Nairobi

The Ngong Road Forest Sanctuary Trust Nature walks are held on the first and third Saturdays of the month i.e. **6 & 20 July, at 9:00 a.m.** Meet at the stairs leading to the Restaurant at the Racecourse.

JULY DIARY

Sat 6	ASF Birdwalks & NRF walk
Mon 8	Bat talk
Sat 20	FFJ Birdwalk & NRF walk
Sun 21	Sunday Birdwatch
Mon 29	Tree Walk
Birdwalks every Wednesday Morning	
Bird ringing every Thursday Morning	

Editor, **Catherine Ngarachu**

NOTICES

BIRD CARE by the Kenya Society for the Protection and Care of Animals

The KSPCA will work with any bird from the tiny, pink, no feathered bobies who struggle to survive, to injured birds with broken legs ond wings.

We need money to pay the vet for his work (he only chorges us for octuol costs he gives his time free) particular needs are 2x2 by 6 ft pieces of wood, and chicken or rabbit mesh to make more aviarys, large wooden boxes (to make holding boxes for birds not ready for the aviaries), gloss point (ony colour to paint boxes and make them more hygienic), towels and flonnels. (You have no idea how many towels you can go through with one bird especially in this weather when you struggle to dry them). (Nor hove you any idea how many mealie works a boby nightjar con eat in o doy!!!)

Contact Jean, KSPCA, Langata Road next to Hillcrest School. Phone numbers 884948, 882500, 880806.

DECLARATION

Nature Kenya does not accept any responsibility whatsoever in respect of negligence of any of its staff, volunteers or members organising the outings/trips or for any loss, injury, death or damage to property.

RENEWALS

BECOME A SPONSOR!

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Ads • 1/4 page @ 1750/- • 1/2 page @ 3000/- with image +500/-

Bird Hotline on page 4

Malindi Camp and Cottage

Budget Lodgings in Idyllic Surroundings
Sabaki River Estuary, Kenya Coast

Five miles north of Malindi lies the Sabaki River, the second largest in Kenya. The site is renowned for its many beautiful birds--Madagascar Pratincole, Malindi Pipit, Carmine Bee-eater, Zanzibar Red Bishop, Fish Eagle, flamingoes and thousands of migratory waders, gulls and terns. This diverse landscape of tall dunes, delta wetlands, lily-covered hippo ponds and Giriama Tribe farms offer infinite hikes and photo opportunities. Malindi Camp and Cottage overlooks the Sabaki Estuary. The two large rooms have private shower and flush toilet and are US $15.00 for single, US $20.00 for double. The campsite is US $5.00 per night per person. Meals are available.

For Reservations Contact: Mr. Rodgers Karabu, PO Box 5289
Malindi, Kenya, East Africa
Email: rodgers@malindi.africaonline.com
Phone: International: 00254 722 797 -- In Kenya: 0722 797213
For more information see: www.malindicampandcottage.com

ASTRONOMY

This month we introduce a brief new column. It has grown from a similar one in the children's magazine *Rainbow*, raised to adult standard for all who care to look up at the night sky. The authors consider astronomy to be very much a part of natural history.

Living near the equator, we are in a privileged position: we can see all the way from north to south poles. If we care to stay up all night, we can see the entire sky in one night (except that in practice, what is on the horizon is blurred, or burned out by sunset or sunrise).

In the course of the night, the stars seem to move slowly across the sky from east to west. It is actually our Earth that spins towards the east, revealing the full sweep of the night sky. The stars also seem to move slowly westwards from night to night. That is the effect of the Earth orbiting the Sun. The information given in *Nature Net* is for Kenya on that particular month and year, in the early evening (about 7 to 9 p.m.).

To observe the stars, choose an evening with few or no clouds, and try to keep away from bright lights. You will find binoculars useful, particularly those with big light-gathering power like 7 x 50 and 10 x 50, if you want to see deep sky objects. Lie on the ground if convenient – but remember where you are and watch out for scorpions and puff adders!

Illustration of the Plough from *The Safari Star Guide* by Alex and Joy MacKay

The Evening Sky in July 2002

By Alex and Ian MacKay and Fleur Ng'weno

Stars

High in the south is the beautiful constellation SCORPIUS. Bright stars form a pattern that winds across the sky like a giant fishhook. At the top of the hook are the scorpion's "body" and "claws" and a beady red "eye". At the end of the hook, two stars form the "sting in the tail".

Lower in the south, the SOUTHERN CROSS is lying on its right side. It is followed by two bright stars in the constellation of the CENTAUR.

High in the north is the pretty little constellation CORONA BOREALIS, in the shape of a crown.

A little west of north, look for the PLOUGH, also called URSA MAJOR. Seven bright stars make the shape of a box with o long handle reaching up into the sky.

Overhead, a little to the west, is the bright orange star Arcturus.

Planets

Venus is a brilliant white object in the west.

Moon

2 July	Last quarter (rises at midnight)
10 July	New moon
17 July	First quarter (overhead at sunset)
24 July	Full moon

Sun

On 6 July, the Earth is at aphelion, as far from the sun as it aets on its orbit. So radiant heat from the sun is minimal. The effect is worldwide, but on the equator it gives us our effective "winter".

Bird Hotline 749957

Grey-rumped Swallow *Seasonal Wetlands near Carnivore, Nairabi/ June* Wednesday Morning Birdwalk

Friedmann's Lark *Shaba N.P./ June* Arabuka Sakoke Forest World Birdwatch '01 leaders

Fire-fronted Bishop *Oltepesi/ May/June* Brian Finch, Richard & Anne Bishop, George Eshiamwata

Moustached Green Tinkerbird, Malachite Sunbird *Oloolua Ridge, Nairobi/ May* Wednesday Morning Birdwalk

African Golden Oriole *Kitiusuru, Nairobi / May* Wednesday Morning Birdwalk

African Crake, African Black Swift, Paradise Whydah, Goliath Heron *Nairobi N. P./ May* Itai Shanni, Shailesh Patel

Golden Pipit *Oltepesi/ May* Sunday Birdwatch

Buff-spotted Flufftail caught and ringed *State House Rd/ May* Ornithology Dept, National Museums